

The Little Pilgrim Series.

**LITTLE PILGRIM
AT AUNT LOU'S**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.

II.

III.

IV.

Little Pilgrim at Aunt Lou's

Little Pilgrim at Aunt Lou's.—Frontispiece.



Bessie was seated on the barn-floor, with all the little
kittens in her lap. p. 21.

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**LITTLE PILGRIM AT AUNT
LOU'S.**

I.

It was a long time after Christmas, and the snow and ice had all melted, and the trees were green again, and the flowers and birds had all come back.

Summer was just beginning again; and on the very day that she was five years old the little pilgrim started on a long journey with papa and mamma and Aunt Lillie.

They were going into the country to Aunt Lou's, to stay for a great many weeks—mamma and Aunt Lillie and Bessie; and papa was going to take them there and stay one night, and then go home again, because he had to attend to his business.

Grandpapa was not going at all now, because he could not leave his church and his poor people; but by and by, he said, when the days and nights were both too hot for him, he would take a vacation like the school-children, and go to Aunt Lou's for a month.

Rosy and Jane had promised to take good care of the house, and they both stood at the gate watching the family off.

At first the little pilgrim thought it very fine to go off in the steam-cars and watch the houses and trees fly past the windows, for this is what they seemed to do; but the cars did the flying, while the houses and trees stayed just where they were before.

There was not a happier little girl to be found that morning than Bessie. She had a beautiful little trunk with her that held all Blanche's clothes, and the key of the trunk was on a ribbon around

her neck. Blanche, you know, was her best dolly—the one her mamma gave her on her last birthday—and she had always taken great care of her, so that she was now almost as good as new.

When mamma began to pack the trunks her little daughter brought nearly every plaything she had to be packed too, for she seemed to think that everything she had must go with her to Aunt Lou's. But mamma told her that there was not room for all her toys, and that she must choose a few things to take with her, and leave the rest.

Bessie was very much puzzled what to choose, and which of her dollies to leave behind. She was afraid that if she took Blanche, Sarah Jane would feel badly; and if she took Sarah Jane, Blanche would not like to be left behind.

So she went to ask Aunt Lillie about it.

“Auntie,” said she, “s'pose you had two little chillens, and your mamma would only let you have one chillen to take away, would you choose Blanche or Sarah Jane?”

“I think,” said Aunt Lillie, who looked very smiling, “that I should have to take the child who needed me most.”

“That's Blanche,” said Bessie, who wanted to take her all the time, because she was so much handsomer than Sarah Jane; “she's the youngest, and I have to be careful of her clothes.”

So, trying to explain it all to Sarah Jane why she was to be left at home, she began to get Blanche ready for the visit at Aunt Lou's.

When the little trunk came, with Blanche's name painted on one end, Bessie was very much delighted; and the tiny dresses and aprons and petticoats were packed in it very neatly.

Miss Blanche had a new travelling suit that Aunt Lillie made for her. It was gray, trimmed with blue; and there was a turban hat with a blue feather in it. Bessie said that Sarah Jane looked very cross when she saw this, but she told her that it was not right to be jealous of her sister.

Papa's eyes laughed when he asked his little girl if he should not get a check for Blanche's trunk and have it taken away by the expressman with the other baggage; and Bessie thought she would like this very much, until Aunt Lillie said that it would not do, because the little trunk might get crushed under the heavy ones.

When they went into the cars papa was carrying Blanche's trunk in one hand, and holding Bessie by the other, and the little pilgrim herself was carrying Blanche.

II.

It was night when they got to Aunt Lou's, and Bessie was fast asleep. She did not even wake up when she was being undressed, and she did not know where she was until next morning.

When she woke the sun was shining right in her eyes, and she was not in her crib, nor in her little blue room at all. There were funny noises outside too; roosters were crowing, and she heard cows, and then she knew in a minute that this must be Aunt Lou's.

No one was in the room with her, for papa had to go off early in the cars, and mamma had gone down stairs to eat breakfast with him.

Pretty soon Aunt Lillie came in and dressed her; and by that time the little pilgrim was quite ready for her breakfast.

How the little cousins hugged and kissed her when she came down stairs! They were so very glad to see her, and they had been allowed to sit up the night before on purpose to welcome her, and had been very much disappointed to find that she was fast asleep.

The oldest of these cousins was a boy—a very big boy, Bessie thought, for he was ten years old. His name was Jimmie, and he liked to read better than he liked to play, but he would play with them sometimes.

Nellie was a very nice cousin indeed. She was eight years old, and she was always pleasant and smiling and ready to amuse the little ones.

One of these little ones was Charlie, who had another name, and I am sorry to say that this was “Cry-Baby.” Charlie was four years old, and he cried when his face was washed, and cried when he tumbled down, and cried when he couldn’t have what he wanted.

When he was not crying he smiled and looked like a very happy little boy; and this was the way he looked now.

Then there was Baby Alice, a dear little girl who had to be carried and who could not speak a word yet.

Mr. and Mrs. Mason, who were Bessie’s Uncle Ralph and Aunt Lou, lived on a large farm, where they had plenty of people to help do the work; and these people had houses of their own not very far from the large house in which Bessie’s cousins lived.

There were a great many fields around the house, and woods, and a pretty little brook that seemed to be singing a song the whole time. The place was called “Brook Farm;” and there were so many horses, and cows, and sheep, and pigs, and chickens that Bessie wondered if any one could count them.

“Eat your breakfast, dear,” said Aunt Lou when she saw that Bessie left her bread-and-milk to look at the pets her cousins were already bringing in to show her, for they had all had their breakfasts; “there will be plenty of time for all that afterward.”

But the little pilgrim could not stop long to eat. Charlie had just whispered, “Tree tittens—four, five, tree—tome and see!” and away she flew.

“I expect my little girl to run wild now,” said mamma, smiling.

“It will do her a great deal of good,” replied Aunt Lou; “she is looking too pale, and I want to see her cheeks like roses before she leaves here.”

In a few moments there was a great screaming and boo-hoo-ing from Charlie, who came running to the house crying as hard as he could.

“What is the matter now?” asked his mamma, who did not seem to think there was much the matter.

Then Charlie roared harder than ever, and held up a little fat hand to show a great scratch on it. Pussy had scratched him because he was taking her babies up by the tail.

“He is real naughty,” said Nellie, who had followed him; “he makes the little kittens squeal, and that is why Pussy scratches him.”

Charlie fairly bellowed now, because his scratch hurt him and because he could not do as he liked with the kittens. He had been sick a great deal, and had had his own way too much.

Aunt Lillie put a piece of thin plaster on the scratch, and then Charlie said, “All well now,” and ran back to the barn with his face full of smiles. His mamma thought he had been punished enough, for Pussy gave him a pretty hard scratch, and he promised to be very gentle with the kittens.

Bessie was seated on the barn-floor with all the little kittens in her lap, and Mother Puss was purring around her and not minding it at all. They were such pretty little things—white, with black tails, and they all had blue eyes! They had just got their eyes open.

“Here is some milk for you, Pussy,” said Martha as she put a large dish of it down on the floor. Martha was the girl who took care of the milk and butter, that were kept in a little house half sunk in the ground. This was the dairy.

Pussy did not like to leave her kittens long, even to get something to eat, and Martha often brought her milk, so that she would not be hungry.

“Come with me,” said Martha to the children, “and I will show you some babies smaller than these kittens; I found them yesterday.”

The kittens were quickly put back into their straw nest in the manger, and the children followed Martha to see what she had to show them.

She took them into the corn-crib, which was near the barn; and where the corn was all kept with which the animals were fed. In a dark corner, right under a sloping beam, there was an old box, and in this box there was a funny sort of nest made of straw and rags.

“Are they birds?” asked Nellie as she tiptoed up to it.

“Birds!” repeated Jimmie, who was just behind her: “don’t you know better than that? They are mice—white mice, I shouldn’t wonder.”

“No, they ain’t,” said Bessie, who was stretching her little neck to get a good view of them; “they’re all pink. I see ’em!”

She did not know why she was laughed at, for they certainly were pink—very pink indeed, and very little.

“La, child!” said Martha, laughing too, “that ain’t the color they’re going to be. They’re pink because they haven’t got any fur yet,

only their skins. I guess, though, that they'll be just mouse-color. But ain't they cunning?"

"Me want one," said Charlie, "to play with."

And when they told him that he could not take any of Mrs. Mouse's children, as she had only gone out for a little while, he, as usual, began to cry.

"Go ahead, Cry-Baby!" said Jimmie; and Charlie did go ahead.

But something dreadful happened just then.

No one knew that Mrs. Puss had just followed them in to see what was going on; and as soon as she caught sight of the nest with three little mice in it, she knew what they were in a minute. She made one jump and gobbled them up; every little mouse was gone, and Puss sat licking her chops and feeling that she had made a very good breakfast.

"Well, I never!" said Martha, almost out of breath with surprise.

"You horrid cat!" said Nellie, just ready to cry for the fate of the poor little mice.

Bessie quite cried, it seemed so dreadful; and as to Charlie, his roars were heard at the house.

Aunt Lou and Bessie's mamma and Aunt Lillie all came running out to see what was the matter. Had Charlie's eyes been scratched out now?

"Oh, mamma!" sobbed Bessie as she buried her head in her mother's dress, "that wicked cat has eaten up the little mouses!"

“Do have her killed, mamma,” said Nellie; “she is too bad to live.”

Every little face looked angry and excited, and Charlie kept on screaming.

Then Martha told about the little nest with the three pink mice in it, and how Puss had eaten them for her breakfast.

“I wish the cow or something big would eat her kittens,” said Jimmie; “see how she would like that!”

“Children,” said Aunt Lou, “you are all wrong, and Puss is not wicked at all. She was born to eat mice—that is her business; and I am sure that papa will be very much obliged to her for clearing a nest of these destructive little creatures out of his corn-crib.”

“But they were so cunning!” sobbed the children.

“All young animals are ‘cunning,’” replied mamma with a smile, “but we should not be very comfortable unless some of them were killed. How would it do to have the house full of mice?”

That did not sound very pleasant, and they began to see that Pussy was not so bad, after all.

“Besides,” said Jimmie, remembering what he had read, “we eat cows and sheep and pigs and chickens ourselves, so we are just as bad as Pussy.”

“Come with me, Charlie,” said Aunt Lillie, “and I will show you a picture-book which I am sure you will like.”

Charlie stopped crying at this promise, and went with his auntie, of whom he was very fond.

But he and Bessie had a quarrel that same day about this very auntie, whom Bessie always claimed as her own property. She didn't see how she could belong to any one else; and she said to Charlie, "She isn't your aunt Lillie; she's mine."

"Tain't!" replied Charlie, beginning to blubber; "it's mine auntie Lillie."

The little pilgrim was so angry at this that she started to run and ask Aunt Lillie if she wasn't her very own auntie and no one else's. But she went too fast, and before she knew it she was down on her nose.

Auntie happened to come along just in time to pick the little pilgrim up and comfort her. Then she told the two little cousins how wrong it was to quarrel, and that she was auntie to both of them.

So the children kissed and made it up, and Charlie promised that he would try not to be such a cry-baby.

III.

There were so many things to see at Aunt Lou's that the little pilgrim lived out of doors nearly all the time.

"You must come and see my baby-house," said Nelly; and Bessie wondered if it would be prettier than hers.

It was in a very funny place, for Nellie took her down by the brook; and there was a hollow in a great tree that had a little table in it, and two or three rag dollies sitting by the table, and cups and saucers on it; but the cups and saucers were not like any that Bessie had ever seen before. They were made of acorns, which Jimmie had cut out for her, and the cups looked like little thimbles. Fresh grass was spread down for a carpet, and Nellie told her little cousin that this was her summer-house.

"You see," she said, "that I can leave my dollies and all out in the rain, and it don't hurt them a bit. I have nicer ones for in-doors, but I love these just as well, because I can do what I like with them.— Hold up your head, Polly, but don't stare so at the company; haven't you any manners?"

Bessie looked all around for the little girl, but she did not see any. Nellie burst out laughing.

"There she is," said she, pointing to the largest rag doll; "I always talk to her as if she was alive. It's real fun. This is her sister, Martha Jane. She has fits."

"My rag doll is Sarah Jane," said the little pilgrim. "What does Martha Jane have fits for?"

“Cos she likes ’em,” replied Nellie; “she’d rather have fits than anything else. But Polly likes measles best.”

This seemed very strange to Bessie, but Nellie was so much older that she thought she must know.

When they got tired of playing with the baby-house they took off their shoes and stockings and paddled in the brook. The water was delightfully cool, and Bessie knew now why the cows like to stand in the water in warm weather.

There were stepping-stones in the brook, and the two little girls crossed from one to another, and paddled about as much as they liked.

“It is nicer here than it is at our house,” said Bessie; “we haven’t got any brook, nor any barn nor corn-crib; and I’m going to ask my papa to come here to live.”

“Then we could visit every day,” said Nellie; “you could come to see me, and I could go to see you.”

But when Bessie got back to her home again she forgot all about going to live at Brook Farm, and was just as well satisfied with grandpapa’s house as ever.

When they were tired of the brook they put on their shoes and stockings again and went to look at Martha’s dairy. Martha had said that they might come and see her make butter.

Bessie liked going into funny little houses, and it was so nice and cool in the dairy. Everything was so clean and shining, and the tin milk-pans were bright enough for looking-glasses. Some of them were full of milk with rich cream on top, and the little visitor was

allowed to skim some of this off in a pitcher for dinner. She liked to do it very much.

Martha was churning, and she said that the butter had 'most come. She kept looking into the churn every few minutes; and soon she took out large yellow lumps and put them on a flat dish.

These lumps were butter, and she washed them very clean in cold water, and then worked them into shape. She made them into neat-looking pats, and stamped them with different figures. She let Bessie stamp one with a wooden rose, and it looked very pretty.

Then Martha gave each of the children a drink of rich buttermilk from the churn, and they thanked her and went to the house, for it was nearly dinner-time. When they were not far from the kitchen-door they knew that Charlie was coming, there was such a terrible screaming.

“Oh, he’s hurt!” said Bessie, looking frightened; “he’s so little, you know.”

“Pooh!” said Nellie; “I guess he isn’t hurt; he always screams for nothing.”

It happened that Charlie was hurt this time—pretty badly hurt too, for a little boy. But it was some time before his mamma knew it, for, as Nellie said, he always screamed for nothing, and if Aunt Lou had run to him every time that he screamed she would not have been able to do much else.

This is the story he told his mamma between his sobs when he had found her: “Great wicked bumble-bee bited Charlie in his mouf!”

“Let me see the mouth,” said mamma.

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